UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York
Prepared by Central News
DH/1995
9 October 1995

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General, addressing Finance Ministers in World Bank/IMF Development Committee, stresses need for full and prompt payment of United Nations assessed contributions.

* UNPROFOR condemns Bosnian Serb attacks on refugee camps near Tuzla; calls for NATO close air support after peace-keepers are directly targeted.

* Secretary-General says meetings between Angolan Government and UNITA have generated confidence in peace process; voices concern at slow progress in quartering troops.

* United Nations launches inter-agency appeal for $124 million to fund humanitarian activities in Afghanistan for one year.

* Secretary-General meets with Foreign Minister of Iraq; urges implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995).

* Delegates to Conventional Weapons Review Conference agree on text restricting use and transfer of blinding laser weapons.

* Governing Council of United Nations Compensation Commission begins eighteenth session in Geneva.

* * *

The United Nations is facing its worst financial crisis in 50 years and its ability to continue its work is under threat, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today. In an address to Ministers of Finance meeting in the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF) Development Committee in Washington, D.C., he noted that the Organization was owed a total of $3.242 billion and that some 70 countries had not paid their regular budget assessment.

The crisis had arisen not because spending had gone over budget, but because contributions to finance mandated activities had not been paid, the Secretary-General continued. He pointed out that the United Nations was not allowed to borrow against unpaid contributions or charge interest for delayed payment. To deal with the crisis, the Organization had cut expenses,

(more)

For information media—not an official record

streamlined operations and reduced waste, duplication and overlap. It was managing by trimming budgets and by postponing payments to troop contributors and suppliers, but that made it difficult to fulfil mandates adequately.

The Secretary-General went on to say that he had been forced to reassess peace-keeping operations from a financial perspective, with the result that the crisis was being felt on the front lines. If action was not taken quickly, human suffering would increase and people would die. He urged the Ministers to ensure that their countries' financial obligations to the Organization were met on time and in full.

* * *

Bosnian Serb forces attacked refugee camps near Tuzla over the weekend, killing at least ten civilians and injuring many more, a United Nations spokesman reported today. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) condemned the attacks, describing them as outrageous and barbaric. The Serbs also directly targeted United Nations personnel stationed at Tuzla airbase, causing the death of one peace-keeper. As a result, the Force Commander of UNPROFOR, Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith, called for North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) close air support.

Meanwhile, efforts were being made to restore utility supplies to Sarajevo so that the cease-fire agreed to by the Bosnian parties could take effect after midnight. Electricity lines from the east and south of the city had been repaired by this morning, and work was under way on the main line from the west. Sarajevo's water pumps were also being repaired.

* * *

The recent meetings between the President of Angola, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, and the leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Jonas Savimbi, have generated greater trust and confidence in the Angolan peace process, according to the Secretary-General. However, in a report to the Security Council dated 4 October, he expressed concern at the slow progress in the process of quartering troops, which was essential for full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol.

The report called on the Government and UNITA to promptly finalize arrangements for the return of the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) to barracks, the quartering of the rapid reaction police and the disarmament of civilians. It also urged them to quickly conclude their discussions on the formation of the new armed forces. Unless an equitable and practicable agreement was reached in the near future, that issue could jeopardize the peace process as a whole.

The Secretary-General welcomed the results of the Brussels Round-Table Conference, at which donors pledged a total of $993 million for Angola. However, he also noted that outstanding assessed contributions to the Special

Account for the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) amounted to $117 million.

* * *

The United Nations today launched an inter-agency appeal for $124 million to fund humanitarian activities in Afghanistan for a one-year period through September 1996. More than 1.7 million Afghans receive United Nations humanitarian assistance.

Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen has been in Afghanistan recently in his capacity as United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator. He will leave Geneva on Wednesday for a one-week visit to Sierra Leone to assess the humanitarian situation there.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met with the Foreign Minister of Iraq, Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, on Friday, according to a United Nations spokesman. They discussed the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), which allowed for a partial lifting of sanctions against Iraq to enable it to sell oil and use the proceeds for humanitarian purchases.

The Secretary-General urged the Iraqi Government to rethink its position on resolution 986 (1995) and to implement it. However, the Foreign Minister stated that his Government's position with regard to the resolution remained unchanged.

* * *

Delegates attending the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons have agreed on a text restricting the use and transfer of blinding laser weapons. The text, which represents a delicate balance among a spectrum of views on the details and extent of a ban on such weapons, is subject to approval by the States Parties to the Convention before the Conference ends on 13 October.

The breakthrough was achieved after a series of closed meetings and intensive consultations. Some delegations advocated a total ban on all laser weapons which might cause long-term vision loss, while others cautioned against over-restriction of the development of laser technology for military use.

* * *

The Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission today began its eighteenth session in Geneva. During the three-day session, it will consider some 217,000 additional claims for compensation resulting from departures from Iraq and Kuwait during the Gulf War. Those claims from 67 countries amount to some $770 million. The Council will also discuss the status of the compensation fund.

* *** *